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The entire social order, as the aggregate of conjugal or familial arrangements and vital functions of the tribe or community, proves to be naturally humane and, therefore, appears in an altogether friendly, pleasant light.

A. Courtship and Marriage

The individual family, the supporting pillar of the entire social order, is regulated in its origin and its continuation according to fixed, unchangeable fundamental principles. These principles are kept alive as customs in the consciousness and conscience of the people. They are made known to each member of the tribe and are more or less familiar to him. Since custom and practice are the primary law in the performance of duty, the centuries have not eaten away any of this, and whatever has remained down to the present time is to be justly and lawfully regarded as ancient tribal heritage.

The individual family consisting of parents and children is /629/ basically independent and a compact union. It is founded on mutual affection between the two lovers and the desire for life-long union. It is held together by the increasing spiritual relationship of the two partners. Its vitality is assured by the fellowship of work and possessions, food gathering and consumption. It grows beyond itself by the self-evident duty of parents to beget several children and through them to insure the permanence of the tribe.

Although these vital customs pertaining to the institution of the family have endured in century-long uniformity, foreign influences have exerted such pressure on it for several decades that this firm structure has finally become undermined. Conditions have arisen in recent times which cannot be regarded as natural, and their effects on marital conditions have created a sad caricature of the original pattern of marriage. These regrettable changes and the false and inadequate observations of most travelers since the middle of the previous century do not give a picture of the basic organization of the institution of the family among the Yamana (1).

1. What has been recorded from still older

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periods lacks the proper completeness and accuracy. As an example, which we could replace by even more inadequate ones, Fitz-Roy (a):182 will suffice. He writes about how a bride is obtained: "As soon as a youth is able to maintain a wife, by his exertion in fishing or bird-catching, he obtains the consent of her relations, and does some piece of work for her parents. Having built or stolen a canoe for himself, he watches for an opportunity, and carries off his bride. If she is unwilling, she hides herself in the woods until her admirer is heartily tired of looking for her, and gives up the pursuit; but this seldom happens" /cited in English/. Now one should compare this with the following lines on how a marriage actually takes place.

124 I, too, began my observations at a time when original conditions were already showing changes here and there as a result of the devastating influence of European civilization. Hence my research could not rest solely on direct observation, but was largely dependent on questions and inquiries. Fortunately, at that time I met several older men and women who still vividly recalled all the laws and customs upon which marriage and family life were built in former times. They themselves had strictly retained almost all the activity of the missionaries and the influence of European civilization. Even though these conditions of research were less favorable, they at least helped me to grasp clearly those principles of the marriage institution and the course of family life that in former times were exclusively valid.

125 If we contrast with this the judgments and assertions of travelers of former times, we see with frightening clarity how little truth they often contain and how boldly and unscrupulously they were circulated. They not only burdened my research work, but it sometimes also became a highly ungrateful task. /630/ It is a satisfaction to me, however, that the final result, as it is contained in the following pages, has been set forth in detail and without error.

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594 exertions of earlier navigators do not, for obvious reasons, deserve attention.

/640/ Not at all infrequently regular bride purchase is mentioned, as Hyades (q):304, for example, does: "The woman is not, as a rule, consulted; she is usually purchased from her parents" /translated from French/ (14). Beve (r):137 expresses

> 14. Hyades (q):378 does not mention actual sale of the girl elsewhere: "The young girl is not consulted in the choice of a husband; the parents give her to the one who suits them and who is always the strongest and the most respected among the candidates" /translated from French/.

himself more in detail on the subject: "The relationship between the spouses can be regarded more as a commercial agreement. Among the various suitors for the daughter, the father chooses the strongest, the most skillful, the one who is the most compliant with regard to his wishes, and with this one he bargains about the number of skins which the son-in-law must give him and the number of days he must work for him. Only after the contract has been settled is the bride informed of it, and, no matter what her private feelings are, she takes care not to betray them, and, whether or not she is willing, she is led into the hut of the bridegroom." To this we merely wish to add briefly that in most cases the two young hearts have found each other long before their parents are aware of it, and that they can hardly ever be made to abandon their decision by outside influences. Even Bridges (r):333 at one time maintains that the bride is bartered: "The women were given in marriage, in many cases even sold, according to a certain rule. The payment was made in work or gifts of skins, etc. The required performance was in proportion to the importance of the parties. If the son-in-law was strong and the relatives of the woman weak, there was little or nothing, and there was much if the situation was reversed. The only rule was convenience or common interest" (15). Anyone who knows the social system of

15. Earlier Bridges (s):301 wrote about this

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in a different vein: "Sometimes the father of the girl is in great difficulty through several men expecting him to give him /sic/ his daughter. He, of course, gives her to him of whom he is most afraid; this, of course, makes the others his enemies" /cited in English/. This does not exactly agree with what he maintained shortly before (ibid., p. 184). And three years later he gives still another version: "Sons-in-law are expected, either by gifts or work, to purchase their wives" /cited in English/ (MM:III,117,1869). Thus, one contradiction after another.

the Yamana will find it impossible to reconcile it with this last description of conditions. In Outes (g):54 also we read: "They buy the women with gifts.... If the gift is not enough, the father returns in a few months and takes back the woman, selling her to someone else. If the husband is displeased with his wife, he can send her back to her father, who must return the purchase price. In this case, while the father lives, she belongs to him anew, and he can again sell her" /translated from Spanish/. If such conditions really existed, a quiet, secure family life would be found only in an infinitesimally small number of huts (16).

16. Similar statements exist, in Wieghardt:40, for example. From all this Spears:69, who in other respects is not very reliable, not too incorrectly concludes: "Marriage was a matter of purchase and sale; wives were sold, sometimes, by husbands, and daughters were invariably sold by fathers" /cited in English/. Thus one inaccurate report is linked to another.

This is obvious and needs no substantiation.

584 /841/ In reality, marriageable boys and girls commonly have unimpeded freedom of choice, except for the few obstacles to marriage about which the uncle or the aunt in particular must be

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584 on the alert. It is also simply inconceivable that a girl should be forced into a marital union with a boy who does not like her. She would be adequately protected against coercion by his relatives. Every adult knows very well that a woman who no longer cares for her husband -- she previously joined herself to him in the free choice of love -- leaves him and will not be chained to him by any means. It is true that sometimes female relatives direct the attention of the girl to a particular chap who, in their opinion, would be suitable for her, but they do not dare press her.

583 584 431 What incorrectly informed Europeans call "payments" are actually voluntary gifts which the bridegroom or son-in-law gives the father of his chosen one from a sense of courtesy and gratitude, joy and satisfaction. This custom belongs in the category of obligations of the son-in-law toward his father-in-law. It is natural that the former makes an effort to learn indirectly the special wishes of the latter and to consider them as far as possible. To speak of a definite price range and standard of value of these free gifts is altogether false. Prominent, wealthy, or mighty families who are able to make certain demands for the marriage of their child do not exist among the Yamana, nor is personal competence or the individual qualities of a marriageable young man weighed against material values. If a chap makes extraordinary efforts to win the girl and finally succeeds because she yields, it is quite in order for him to make lavish gifts to her parents.

As long as this custom exists, it is taken for granted that the father of the girl expects something from his future son-in-law (17).

17. To this extent Stirling's assertion of March, 1864, is justified: "The father of the future bride expects ransom-money. On this occasion, an axe, a blanket, a knife, some fishhooks, brads, etc., form part of the price. Sometimes the future son-in-law serves for a period, I believe, the father of the betrothed, or presents a canoe, etc." /cited in English/ (VSA: XI, 239;1864). A commercial pact, such as Spegazzini (a):165 describes, is never made.

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583 584 431 This, according to Outes (g):54, includes either knives, harpoon points, and finished weapons, or skins and flint, sometimes even a new canoe. Neither the son-in-law nor the father-in-law regards such things as an actual purchase price for the delivery of the marriageable girl, for there is never any mention of this when the chap makes inquiries of the father of his beloved.

I was emphatically assured that sometimes special gifts were not given the parents of the girl, either during the courtship /642/ or at the marriage, and some men do not bring more than a large sea lion. After Alejandro finally won the long-wooed Elisa (p. 390), he did not give her parents the least little thing. Her mother, Adelheid, somewhat disappointed over this behavior of her present son-in-law, told me: "Alejandro is a fop; he acts as though he were a European and does not know what used to be customary among us Yamana." In the end, how could insignificant trifles compare with the fact that a girl is willing to give herself to a husband (18)!

18. The following assertion in Outes (g):55 definitely shows the impossibility of the conditions which he describes: "If the gift is not enough, the father returns in a few months and takes back the woman, selling her to someone else. If the husband is displeased with his wife, he can send her back to her father, who must return the purchase price" /translated from Spanish/. We come across similar discrepancies among other Europeans who never became properly acquainted with procedures in Tierra del Fuego.

It is equally incorrect to speak of "dowry" in connection with those insignificant possessions that the young woman takes when she goes to her husband. Certain things, such as clothing and ornaments, simply belong inseparably to her, whether she is married or not, and this private property is not in the least augmented when she leaves the parental hut and goes to her chosen bridegroom. Bove (e):158 writes: "A canoe and a harpoon are

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583 the bride's dowry." This interpretation is meaningless. The
584 canoe, without which a young married couple cannot exist, is
431 usually built by the husband himself, or by his own father or neighbors with the young man's help. Possibly the father of the bride also took part in its construction. The harpoon is part of the equipment of a man and is neither used by a woman nor given by her to a man.

583 In some of the literature, mention is made of abduction, but specific examples or cases that have been observed are not cited. Despard (b):698 maintained: "Sometimes wives are stolen, sometimes they run away. When recovered, after either case, they are beaten, the supposition being, it seems, that in the former case they themselves encouraged the theft" /cited in English/. The qualification mentioned is significant and is immediately put to account. Hyades (p):334 states briefly that "one sometimes observes a marriage by capture" /translated from French/ (19). The way of life and the position of a marriageable

19. It is not likely that the Mission Scientifique observed the procedure of an abduction. The same Hyades (b):1346 expresses himself in another place more vaguely, "sometimes there is marriage by capture" /translated from French/.

girl within her family absolutely contradicts all false assertions, for it is simply impossible to abduct a woman. It is true that
837 sometimes a married woman who wishes secretly to leave her husband accepts the help of a man whom she knows well in order to escape. If, however, she chooses this expedient, namely, flight under the protection of a man, it is her own decision. Moreover, it can happen that a married woman yields to persuasion and /643/ follows her seducer for a few days, after which she returns to her rightful husband. Neither case has anything to do with abduction. BD:227 gives kwisságuntúkū, "to take by force another man's wife and marry her as a wife" /cited in English/; also BD:303, manáguū, "to escape as a wife from her husband by stealth" /cited in English/. The proper meaning here,

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584 593 It has also happened, as Sara recalled, that the two lovers decided to elope, that they renounced any kind of marriage celebration, and that they remained away from their parents until they no longer feared reproach. Even if a child should be subjected to threats, he would find sufficient support from close relatives against the inadmissible interference of parents, if only he [604] does not become intimidated and stands his ground. It is the special duty of the uncle to help so that every young person who wishes to marry is permitted to make an absolutely free decision. In [624] case the uncle's influence on the parents does not bring results, he can even influence public opinion against them if they restrict their child's freedom of choice. All opposition dissolves •[583] automatically when the young couple has a child to be cared for. Thus, a person who must fear the disapproval or resistance of parents toward a marriage elopes with his partner; once the couple is blessed with one or two children, no one can interfere or separate them.

587 /645/ A woman who becomes a man's second wife also has unrestricted freedom of choice. If she is a widow, she must sometimes be glad if a man will take her, whether she likes him or not, and she suppresses her own wishes without a murmur. Her position is more favorable if an older man, whose wife has perhaps become incapable of working, woos her. From the start she can then secure for herself certain rights and a favorable position in the family. In the great majority of polygamous marriages the two 585 women are sisters (21); the second one to be taken by the man is

> 21. This custom may be verified in Bridges' (i):21 words: "When a man married more wives than one they were generally sisters, which fact tendered greatly to strengthen the family party" /cited in English/. Relationship by marriage as such does not constitute blood relationship, hence does not hinder marriage (p. 417).

thus frequently better situated in many respects than in a monogamous marriage.

836 tion. Intercourse between the unmarried was disapproved, but
582 breaches of the code were not infrequent. Marriage between blood relatives, however distant, was in theory taboo; in practice, the prohibition included half-siblings, uncle and niece, aunt and nephew, first cousins, both parallel and cross, and seemingly extended somewhat beyond these limits. Since near relatives commonly lived near one another, marriages tended to be locally exogamous. Marriages with mates from far distant localities, especially outside one's own of the five dialectic groups, were disliked and infrequent. Marriage with a mother and her daughter was disapproved, but not so strongly as marriage with near blood-kin. Sponsors were barred from marrying their respective candidates of the *ôéxaus*[1] initiation rite.

584 583 Choice of mate was ordinarily free on the part both of the boy and of the girl, and appears to have been based largely on mutual affection and regard. Gifts from the groom to the bride's father were given and expected, as were also certain services before and after marriage. But a bride-price as stipulated by or haggled for by the father was absent. Bride capture or stealing, if it occurred, must have been very rare.

582 Boys and girls did not marry until they had passed through the required *ôéxaus* initiation. Gusinde (1937, p. 633) estimates the more common chronological ages of first marriages as about 17 to 19 years for boys, and 15 to 16 for girls.

Monogamy was by far the most prevalent form of marriage. Polyandry did not occur. Polygyny was permitted, but was uncommon. A few men had two wives, more commonly sisters; cases of three wives, if they occurred, must have been very rare. On the death of a man's wife, he had a certain marriage claim to her unmarried sister. On the death of a woman's husband, she frequently became, and under certain circumstances was expected or obliged to become, the wife of his oldest surviving brother, especially his unmarried brother, unless she married another man. This custom (the levirate) was, from the native point of view, primarily an obligation of the father's brother to be responsible for his nephews and nieces, a responsibility that lay on the uncle even though his brother's widow married another man. A surviving married brother was not entirely free to marry the widow, as his own wife might object.

585 The chief wedding rite consisted in painting the cheeks of the couple with three red parallel horizontal lines. These were worn and renewed for a week, during which time there were feasting and dancing, and at the end of which the couple went off together in their own canoe.
591 Customarily, they remained with the bride's people for a few months,

[1] See the second of English ch, 1 of English ch.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

Among the Yahgan, marriage by capture seems to have been less common than among the Ona. A woman given in marriage by her father against her will soon abandoned the undesired husband. In fact the Yahgan showed a tendency to change husbands and wives not infrequently, which we may term progressive polygamy. According to Rev. Thomas Bridges (1884, p. 206) a man might have from one to four wives at a time, but the number was not fixed by custom.

Infidelity resulted in no fixed form of punishment, but both the offending man and woman were apt to be beaten. Shortly before our arrival a Yahgan man had disappeared. It was rumored that his wife, enraged at his amours, had beaten him with a paddle and accidentally killed him.

Children

In the old days, to judge by the number of deserted orphans set down in the mission records, the Yahgan did not greatly devote themselves to the care of the children. Abortion seems to have been a common practice, and infanticide we judge was not rare. To reach the facts is somewhat difficult because early explorers did not have sufficient knowledge to describe such practices, and the mission contact soon put an end to them or drove them under cover.

Soon after birth had taken place the Yahgan mother bathed in the sea and the new-born child was also immersed in order to toughen it. This was a rather terrible ordeal for an infant, for the sea temperatures of winter and summer range from 40° to 50° Fahrenheit, while the air at best could be described as no warmer than temperate. We have no figures to show what mortality this custom entailed, yet cannot but believe that soon after birth all but the most vigorous and robust infants were thus ruthlessly eliminated.

After delivery, not only the mother but the father as well was expected to rest for a week or more. In this custom we see incipient couvade.

Games and Amusements

The Yahgan to pass the time indulged in various simple games and in singing and dancing. Of necessity the young boys devoted much care and time to practice with spear, bow and arrow, sling, and stones; but while these exercises often assumed the form of